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COURSE

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Catechetical Institution,

Through three Classes of *Catechumens*,
Consisting of

- I. An Introductory Discourse, to Catechetical Instruction, being a Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of *Maryland*, concerning the same.
- II. The Church Catechism with some proper Texts of Scripture, Prayers, and Graces; For the first Class.
- III. An Essay towards rendering the Expositions on the Church Catechism, more useful for the Second Class,
- IV. A Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant, to fit the Elder *Catechumens*, for Confirmation and the Lord's Supper; Compos'd for those of the Third Class; As also
- V. A Pastoral Discourse to young Persons, reminding them of the Necessity and Advantage of an Early Religion; Subsequent to their having ratify'd their Baptismal Covenant at either Ordinance.

By Thomas Bray, D. D.

L O N D O N:
Printed by J. Brudenell, for W. Hawes, at
the Rose in Ludgate-street, 1704.

COURSE

OF

THE

ARTS

AND

SCIENCE

IN

THE

UNIVERSITY

OF

OXFORD

AND

THE

COLLEGE

OF

THE

TRINITY

COLLEGE



An Introductory Discourse
To
Catechetical Instruction

Shewing,
How the same may be made
Both

Practicable and Easie,

By being digested into such a Method
as will render it as well agreeable, as
profitable, both to the

Catechist and Catechumen.

IN A
Pastoral LETTER to the
Clergy of Maryland.

With a

PREFACE.

To the Reverend the Parochial Clergy
and School-Masters in this Kingdom.

By Thomas Bray, D. D.

L O N D O N:

Printed by J. Brudenell in Little Brittain,
for William Hawes, at the Rose in Lud
gate street, 1704.



THE
PREFACE.

To the Reverend the
Parochial Clergy and
School-Masters in this
Kingdom.

Reverend Sirs,

THE following Letter about
a Practical Method of
Catechizing, tho' applied to a
forreign Clergy, having had
the fortune to please some here,
A whose

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whose judgment I ought to submit to; So that I am forc'd to let it appear more publickly abroad, than I did ever intend it should; I thought however, I ought not to let it do so, without first Addressing myself to you, and without craving leave also, with all Submission, to offer to you the Method I have propos'd as best, in Order to Instill into the minds of Youth a due understanding of the Principles of Christianity; and this the rather, because there are some peculiarities in our Circumstances on this side the Water, different from those on the other, with respect to which, something ought to be said by way of Preface.

I am

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I am sure you are as much sensible, as I can be, that the Institution of Youth in the Principles of Christianity is of infinite Consequence to their own private Happiness, and the publick welfare both of Church and State: And I believe you do as earnestly wish as I can, that in an Age so perverse as ours is, when the very Children, from the Example of their Parents, have so little regard to our Exhortations, the Practice of Catechetical Instruction could be so Methodiz'd, as to make this Institution go easily down with all Ranks and Degrees of them.

Now this is the sum of what I have endeavour'd in the follow-

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ing Letter to do: And for this Cause it is, that I have divided the Children and Youth into several Classes, being strongly perswaded, that if this Method were taken in any Parish or School in the Nation, neither Minister nor School-Master would want Catechumens of either Sex, or of whatever Age it can be thought reasonable to have Persons come to be Catechiz'd.

I. As to the first Class, which I make to consist of Children, till about the Age of nine Years, and whom I would have to learn by heart the Words of the Church-Catechism, with a Morning and Evening Prayer, form'd out of the Catechism it self, and which
for

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for that reason will be the more easily learnt by them, I cannot think it hard to get them all to it, if some pains be taken to render their Parents, Guardians, or Masters sensible of their Duty to oblige their Children, Servants, and Apprentices thereunto: And as those Persons can never answer it to God, and the Souls of their Children, Apprentices, and Servants, who do not encourage and oblige them constantly to attend this or the like Method of Instruction, and that till they are at least nine Years of Age; So it will be no hard matter by our publick Sermons, seconded by our private Applications, to render them at last sensible of their Duty therein. Nor,

II. Will

The Pretace.

II. *Will the same Application be without its Effect, with relation to the Youth I have proposed for the Second Class, namely those from nine to thirteen years of Age, tho' never so much taken up with Labour ; if as we say, we stroak them with the Hair, that is render their Task as easie to them as possible, so as not to be Inconsistent with the Labour and Business they are imployed in.*

I do indeed propose to this Second Class of Catechumens, to get some Exposition on the Catechism by heart, which at first sight will seem hard to bring many of them to. But as I make this Class to consist of Children, between nine and thirteen, so I
would

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would have them oblig'd for the first Year to little more than to read in the Congregation the Answers which they are to make. The next Year, or the next going over their Exposition, I would indeed have them to recite by heart each Answer ; but yet so that it is not to be expected from them to do it very distinctly. But at the last going over it, at about eleven or twelve Years of Age, it may be expected, that they should repeat the Answers perfectly well, and after having gone over the Exposition twice before, this will be no hard matter for them to do: And indeed if then the Questions and Answers, were so broken by the Catechist, according to his
own

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own Discretion, that they should be under a necessity of exercising in some measure their own Judgments, by returning, not to a certain Set of Words, a certain and determinate Answer, but appositely so much of the Answer, as belongs to some particular part of the Question, I cannot but think this would be very Beneficial to them: But,

III. I presume it will be thought the greatest difficulty to Constitute a Third Class of Catechumens, or to induce the Youth from fourteen to twenty, to put themselves under our Instruction in a Catechetical way: But yet I am fully persuaded, this will be no hard matter to compass, if proper Methods be

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be taken to perswade them, which I humbly conceive are 1. to Invite each Youth personally to give themselves up to your Instruction: And 2. To take them separately from the Congregation, either before or after Evening Service, into the Chancel, or your own Parlours; And then 3. Having recommended to them a proper Catechetical Treatise to read, to confer with them as it were, and that in a Familiar manner upon what they have last read: And of what mighty consequence would it be, if the Youth of our Nation, after having been publickly Catechiz'd in the Congregation, were put under another course of Catechetical Instructi-

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on suitable to more grown years? Indeed if the Youth of every Parish of about fifteen Years or upwards, till about twenty, should every Sunday Evening after the Congregation is dismiss'd, come to the Minister of the Parish in the Vestry, or Chancel of the Church, or his Parlour, and there render him an account of what they have read, and prepare themselves to answer his Examinations upon the points which they have been reading, the Week or Lord's-Day preceeding; I do not know what would tend more to their Edification than this: It would lay a sort of obligation upon them to read considerable portions every Sunday at least,

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least, and so would inure them to a right spending of that day. It would be a means to fix their attention in their reading. It would give each Minister an opportunity to acquaint himself with the Proficiency of the Youth of his Parish, in knowledge and Vertue; and according as he finds them proficients in both, he might invite them to an early engagement of themselves to God, first in Confirmation, and afterwards at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And lastly, it would wonderfully endear the Minister and his People to each other, than which nothing will be more for their benefit, and his comfort:

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It is sad to see how universal-
ly backward our Youth are,
when grown up, to come to be
Catechiz'd, as if it were too
Childish an Institution, and be-
low them to be seen at. The con-
sequence of which is, that they
never become sufficiently ground-
ed in Christianity, and are let
loose to follow their own vicious
Inclinations, without the Re-
straint of Christian Principles,
when the effects of Corrupt Na-
ture are most strong and boiste-
rous within them, and when
evil Company do most haunt
them. But since it is so, that
perswade them what we can, they
will scarce be brought to submit
themselves to the ordinary Cate-
chizing

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chizing among Children, it will be Necessary that we provide for their safety by some other Method. And this more Manly way of Instruction here propos'd, being more adapted to their Age, and being a kind of Conference with them; I dare say, it would be very taking with all of them: And they would become thereby so thoroughly seasoned, and perfected in Religious Principles, that there would be little danger of their miscarriage ever after.

And this way of putting them to frame Answers themselves, out of what they shall read, will I conceive be much more Easie, and Profitable, than to oblige them to get the Answers by heart, which

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which are form'd for them by others ; More Easie, for perhaps not one in an hundred of those years, when they begin to be engag'd in Business, has leisure sufficient to get any thing considerable without book, which is the reason that so few of the grown Youth can be brought to make any use of those many Expositions which have been made by way of Question and Answer : Whereas, once or twice reading a short Discourse with attention, will enable any Youth of tolerable Apprehensions, to offer at so much toward an Answer, as to satisfy the Catechist that he understands what he reads.

And

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And more Profitable this Method will appear to be, because it puts the Catechumen (as was just now observed, with reference to those of the Second Class) upon a further Necessity of forming a judgment himself upon what he reads; whereas, the bare repeating of an Answer made to his hands, will render him but little wiser than the Parrot, which is taught to utter Words she understands not.

And besides the Advantages in this Method of infusing Christian Knowledge into the minds of Youth, to a degree as would render them, I am perswaded, much above the attainments of many, who are advanc'd far beyond

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yond them in Years; And besides, that at this Catechetical Exercise they will be perfectly instructed in the Method of performing their publick Devotion, to the Glory of God, and the Edification of others, and to their own Comfort, things of the greatest Importance; I say besides the two former advantages to the Catechumens, the Minister himself will find this no small one, accruing also to himself by such his Catechetical Society, that he will be sure of a number of excellent Spirits dispers'd amongst the several Families of his Parish, by whom he might easily revive Family Religion, so universally and shamefully

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shamefully now neglected, and
disus'd; These being as it were
his Lay-Chaplains to perform
that part of Religion therein,
according to his Directions:
Not to say, that so many serious
persons being so sensibly benefited
by his Instructions, and the pains
he has taken with them, will be
upon all occasions his Advocates
against the Obloquies, and Detra-
ctions of those, who are always up-
on the wicked Topick of Revi-
ling the Clergy for their Office
sake.

And now give me leave to
apply my self more particularly to
you, my Learn'd Brethren, who
have the Government of Schools.
And in the first place, I desire

B

you

The Preface.

you would please to consider, that the very Original, and chief design of Schools within the Christian pale, is to instruct Youth in the Principles of Christianity, and to imbue them with Humane Literature, in order only, and in subserviency to that end; According to which Original Institution, one of the great Schools of our Native Country, does still bear in the Frontispeice of its Buildings.

Schola Catechizationis in Christi Op. Max. fide, & bonis Literis.

And pursuant to the same design of their Foundation the 29th Canon does strictly enjoin all School-Masters to Catechize their Scholars. Secondly,

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Secondly, It may be in no case more proper to know your own Power than in this; And that, as it is absolutely in a manner in your own Breasts, to appoint what Books your Scholars must have, so one would think there is scarcely that Parent so bad himself, who will not be very well pleas'd his Child should be Principled in Religion, as well as Learning and who will not thank the School-Master, who puts him upon buying a Catechetical Exposition, and whatever other small Books may be thought requisit to Instruct him in the Principles of his Religion and Devotion.

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Thirdly,

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Thirdly and Lastly, Whereas there never was so great a growth of Deism, and Infidelity as now, it may be worthy your Reflection, whether to have the Youth of the most sprightly parts Instructed in no other Theology than what they learn from the Greek and Latin Poets, may not have a dangerous Tendency to such execrable Opinions, and to a disrelish of Christian Doctrines.

*All which consider'd, I could wish, that every one of your most useful Profession would please to make it a main part of his care, thoroughly to Principle his Scholars in the Doctrine of Christian Religion, by a Weekly Catechizing
of*

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of them : I say in the Doctrine of Christianity, for all Moral Duties are so much the dictates of Natural reason, that half the pains is not necessary to make Men understand Christian Ethics, as Christian Principles, which being many of them above Humane reason, they must be often inculcated, e're they can be apprehended ; And besides, till these Principles, which are the grand Motives, and most forcible reasons to a Holy Life, have obtain'd their due force in our minds, by being competently understood and believed, morality will advance but poorly, as the Watch moves slowly whose spring is weak,

I know,

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I know indeed, in such a
a Laborious Employment as a
School-Master's is the whole week
round, he can find but little
leisure to compose Discourses, and
Explanations of his own, to give
them upon these Heads; and
this perhaps is the great reason
with many that Catechetical
Instruction is so much laid aside
in their Schools. But it is not
at all necessary, that the Cate-
chist of either denomination,
whether Minister or School-Ma-
ster, should himself be the Author
of that Instruction given to Youth:
For why, do not the Learned of
your Profession make use of
Grammars and Classical Books
 compos'd by persons perhaps of less
Learning

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Learning than themselves ? And do they not think, that they do sufficiently discharge their own part, in bringing the Youth on through several Classes to understand these Authors ? It is from that very Method of yours, in teaching Humane Learning, that I have borrowed mine for the more easie acquiring of Divine knowlege ; And why may not Classes be form'd as well for one as the other ? And why may not one day in the Week be set aside to examine them in the parts allotted to them to learn, namely Saturday Morning ? And why after that should they not be dismiss'd with a charge to spend the vacant part of the Lord's Day, in which they

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they are not at the publick Worship, in Studying these rudiments of Christianity? And particularly, and especially, why should not the more grown Youth be strictly enjoyn'd to read with attention, such Books, and such portions, as shall be allotted them? And sure, if all the Youth in Schools were enjoyn'd to read every Sunday such Books as shall be thought proper, and an account were demanded of them concerning what they have read, every Munday Morning, as duly as they are made to say a part in their Grammar; I am sure, I say, this would greatly tend to their Edification, and moreover would have this good effect, that it would
provide

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provide a proper Employment for School-Boys on the Lord's Day, and would inure them to such a Religious way of spending it as would influence their Lives ever after: And tho' some Parents may be such Heathens themselves as to think it lost time that their Children are examined and instructed two Mornings in a Week in the Rudiments of Religion, yet it is to be hoped there are not many but may be made sensible, that it is as material a part of the School-Master's Duty to give the Youth committed to their Charge a thorough and perfect Understanding of the Elements of Christianity, as of Grammar; Nay, and that their own Com-
b fort,

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fort, their Childrens Welfare,
and the publick Happiness, de-
pends infinitely more on one than
the other.

Reverend and Learned Sirs,

I have hitherto addressed my
self to both of you separately; I
shall now add some Considerations
before you conjunctly, as Reasons
why we should now bestir and ex-
ert our selves in the Instruction
of the Youth of all kinds, under
our respective Care, whether as
Ministers, or School-Masters.
For why?

First, I am afraid it is too
certain, and too known a Truth,
namely this, that scarce any Age
heretofore can equal the Impiety
of the present.

There

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There have been indeed horrid Immoralities known in every Age; but in this the very Fundamental Principles of all Religion both Natural and Revealed, are attacked and overbore, by the Confederate forces of Atheists, Deists, and Socinians; And persons now adays Commit Wickedness, not meerly from the Vicious Inclinations of Corrupt Nature, but by Vertue of, and as supported therein by bad Principles.

Secondly the great cause of Loosness in Principles, and Manners is Universally acknowledged to have been owing to the want of Catechetical Instruction in Schools, Families, and Churches,

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ches ; through which Neglect the present Generation of Men having never been well grounded in their Religion are become an easie prey to Infidels, and Hereticks ; who finding the Minds of Persons not prepossess'd with good Principles , have found it no hard matter to infuse their ill ones.

Thirdly, The only way therefore to train up a better Generation of Men for the next Age, and thereby to avert the Judgments of Heaven, which do loudly threaten us, from pouring down upon us, is Universally in all Familys, Schools, and Churches to revive that Ancient, and Necessary method of

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of Instruction, viz. Catechetical Doctrine. And if this were Universally done but by either of us, how happy would the Effects of it be; for indeed tho' none others of our Youth, besides those in Schools, could be brought under such a Catechetical Instruction, yet hence we may reasonably hope for a much better Generation of Men the next Age, than we have the Comfort to see at present, because the greatest, or at least the most considerable part of youth in all Christian Nations, do pass into the World through the door of Shool-Discipline.

But if both Parochial-Ministers, and School-Masters, shall
unani-

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unanimously join, first in training up the youth under their respective charges in the Principles of Christianity, and shall then take the next opportunity of an Episcopal Visitation, to bring them to be Confirmed: This timely Instruction, and this early and solemn engagement to God of Persons in their youth; Of Persons I say, well instructed in the Nature and Importance of their Baptismal Covenant, will by the Divine Blessing, secure so considerable a Number of Persons of the best Capacity and Education, to the Service of their Creator, as will in time outnumber the Sons of Darkness, and
stoutly

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stoutly repell the strong Efforts of Satans Kindom.

And indeed to this Issue I would have your Catechetical Instruction brought; and I would not have it stop in either of the following Gradations, till it be brought to this Issue. I mean I would not have the Catechist of either Denomination cease his Instruction till he has brought his Catechumen to the Bishop to be Confirmed; or at leastwise till he has so prepared him for Confirmation, that if opportunity for it cannot be had, he be duly prepared with requisite Knowledge and Qualifications for the Reception of the Lord's Supper.

Con-

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Confirmation, that Apostolical Ordinance, as it is of vast Consequence to have it duly and solemnly administred, so in a more peculiar manner it is requisite that all our School Youth, when they are come to Years of Discretion, and just before they are entring into the World, should both recognize the Covenant they made with God, and receive the Episcopal Benediction; To do both which they ought to be rightly and duly prepared and qualified.

But then, that they may be rightly and duly qualified for this, it is absolutely requisite that they should be fully instructed in the Covenant which they are to confirm accordingly.

Now,

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Now I do indeed take it that there is not a more Fundamental part of Catechetical Doctrine, and what upon many Accounts is more principally requisite to have the Minds of all Youth, both in Schools and Families, prepossessed withal, than that wherein is deliver'd and explained the general Nature of the Covenant of Grace, that Covenant we enter'd into with God in our Baptism; And I say this is a most Fundamental Doctrine, and principally requisite to be taught to Youth upon many Accounts, because

First, I take the Covenant of Grace, or our Baptismal Covenant, to comprize the whole

C Doctrine

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Doctrin of Christianity, even all that, than which the meanest ought not to know less, and no Man, as a Christian, is necessitated to know more; for in a Word, it is in this Covenant that we have all the Articles of Reconciliation betwixt God and Man included, and consequently the Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion contained.

Secondly, Because a general View of the whole Body of Christianity being in a most natural and regular Method deliver'd in the Doctrin of our Baptismal Covenant, those who shall be so instructed will be able to refer to their proper Heads every Discourse they shall hereafter read.

or

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or hear on any particular Point, to the avoiding of Confusion in their Apprehensions of Divine Truths; and indeed the whole Scheme of Saving Truth being here laid down in an orderly Method, so that every Hearer of the Word of God may be able to refer what at any time he shall hear or read in a desultory manner to its proper Head; it must be of great Consequence to have the Minds of Youth prepossess'd therewith; since for want of Skill enough in most Christian Hearers to digest of themselves the Subject Matter they shall hear or read, into some order, their Notions of Religion do ever remain very confused to their Lives end.

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Thirdly, *And by this means seeing at once the Noble End of Christianity, and with what infinite Wisdom all the parts of it are adapted thereunto, they will be able without further Reading, to discover the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, to the preventing of all Infusions of Atheism, or Deism; for possibly it may be, that for want of having the whole Body of Divinity Preached over to them in a Series of Instruction, and that in a Catechetical way, as is done in the Reformed Churches abroad, Christianity, tho' the most Rational System of Verities in the World, seems to some to be a meer huddle of incoherent Principles*

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ciples and Practices, whose End they know not, nor how wisely every thing therein is adapted to carry on that Noble End.

Fourthly, The general Doctrine of the Covenant of Grace will be also of singular Advantage to all Novices, especially at this time, to be prepossess'd withal, as it is an Excellent Antidote against the two prevailing Heresies of this Age, Socinianism on the one Hand, and Antinomianism on the other; the one the Heresie of the higher, the other of the more vulgar sort of Men; a true State of the Covenant of Grace being alone sufficient to obviate or overthrow,
and

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and that without Disputing, the wretched Principles of both.

And lastly, As to avoiding of Disputes as much as possible, the great Advantage to Religion of this Scheme of Doctrine is this, that tho' the whole Christian Religion be fully represented therein, yet very many of those Controversial Points, which have so much troubled the Protestant Churches, will here be past by, as not falling in therewith; For which Reason the Learned Puffendorf made choice thereof, and wrote his Jus Fœciale, or Doctrine of Covenants, as a Medium, wherein the Protestant Churches might most Happily unite.

Thus

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Thus for many great and good Reasons this might be made a most necessary and prime part of Catechetical Instruction, but more particularly it ought to be so, I presume, with reference both to Confirmation, and the Worthy Reception of the Lord's Supper, since in both these Ordinances their Covenant with God it is, which they are to renew, to ratify and confirm with him. I would indeed have every Minister of Religion, and every School-Master in Christendom make it a weighty Case of Conscience, with reference to himself, not to let one Youth in his Parish or School lanch forth into a very dangerous World without

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out having first brought him, if not before his Bishop, which ought to be done if possible, yet at leastwise to the Holy Altar, there Solemnly to renew his Covenant with his God, to engage himself more close to his Service, and withal to Celebrate his Praises, for being called into that State of Salvation thro' Jesus Christ our Lord; but then it is self-evident that to prepare them Worthily to do this, they should be first fully instructed in the whole Doctrine of the Covenant of Grace; that they should be inform'd of the Nature, Terms and Conditions of the same; and shewed withal by whose Mediation it was obtained for them,
by

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by what assistance they shall be Enabled to perform it; Under what Sponsors, and securities to the Church of God, they entered into it; and lastly the greatness and indispensableness of their Obligations thereto.

What remains to be done with those of the Third Class, according to that Scheme of Instruction I have given in my Pastoral Letter, is to direct the youth under our respective Charge in the use of the Common-prayer; A thing of that importance and consequence to the Honour of God, to the beauty and order of Divine Service in his Church, and to the Edification of the Catechumens themselves, that I can
c scarcely

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scarcely forbear here to reiterate
my Importunities, that we should
make it our special care to have
all the Ranks and degrees of them
provided with Common-pray-
ers, and then instructed by us in
the use thereof; so as through the
whole Service to read audibly,
gravely, and devoutly, the parts
alotted for them and all the Laity.
And it is not to be imagin'd how
much to the mutual Edification,
and Devotion both of Minister
and People; it will tend, as to
hear the Divine Service, gravely
and devoutly read by the Mini-
ster, so to have the Congregati-
on make their Responses in an au-
dible, solemn, and serious man-
ner; A thing which to my certain
know-

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knowledge (for I know it by frequent experience) the youth of all Ranks and Qualities, may without much importunity, and a little direction be brought unto.

And thus having given my thoughts upon the several Gradations that may be taken by all of us, whether Ministers or School-masters, in the Instruction of Children and Youth, I have nothing more to add, but to propose a method, whereby both may be provided of Books proper for them, with the greatest ease, and the least charge.

Now for this purpose in the Plantations, I found it would be of great advantage to have in every Ministers keeping, with
c 2 whom

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whom I was concern'd, that
which I call a Lay-mans Library,
consisting of a considerable num-
ber of small Books sent over, and
kept in a Book press, and thence
to be given and Lent according
to discretion, as amongst the
grown People of the Country, so
especially among the Catechumens;
Whereby, much good was done,
for these Books being lodg'd with
the respective Ministers abroad,
It became easie to them to sup-
ply the Children and youth with
the Books, which they had thus
at hand. And indeed from many
parts I have receiv'd such ac-
counts of the good effects of this
provision, that I cannot repent
of my own Personal Charge and
Trow,

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Trouble therein, how considerable soever both have been.

And now upon such experience I hope I may be excus'd, if I propose, that in something alike method, a considerable stock of Books, especially of the Catechetical kind, should be provided at hand for all our Catechumens in either our Parishes, or Schools.

I do not mean that this should be done at the particular and private Charge of either Minister, or of any one Person besides in a Parish, which cannot ordinarily be expected from us ; But.

1. I would recommend the having a Book press with a lock and key, fixt in the Vestry, or Chancel of every Church.

2. 1

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2. I would humbly propose that we send to such Book-sellers, as shall use us best, for a considerable quantity of Books for the several Classes of Catechumens; more or less, according to the number of Catechumens in our Parishes respectively, and to commit them to the Parish Clark, to retail them out to the Children and youth, who are to make use of them.

3. As for poor Servants who are not able to buy for themselves, we would do well to perswade their Masters to do that Act of charity for them. And as for the Children of the poor, we may perswade some Persons of Quality if there be any such with-

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within our parishes, or some of the wealthier Inhabitants, who are well dispos'd to good Works, especially if Landlords, to bestow a few of these Books upon the poorer sort, in a more especial manner, on their Tenants. And our care in seeing that the Parish Clerks gather up the Money, and that it be return'd in due time, may be accounted sufficient on our part.

4. As for Schools, the like method may be taken in these Seminaries of Religion, (as I could wish them all made) That is, I would recommend it to the School-masters to send for such Quantities of Catechetical Books, as there will be occasion for; To
And

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see that they be retail'd out, and the money return'd in due time. And the reason why I propose that such sort of Books should be provided at hand in Parishes and Schools, is that by being at hand, the Children, youth and Servants might with such ease be provided of them, that no excuse might be urg'd on the account of difficulty in getting them. For to render any good design practicable (as this of Catechising in the method propos'd may be reckon'd amongst the best) It is not sufficient barely to propose it; Nor yet to urge the Children and youth to furnish themselves with necessary Books, that they may come profitably under a Catechetical

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technical Instruction : But it will be found moreover requisite, to bring the Books themselves as near home to them as possible ; since the slightest pretences will serve the turn with them, and even their Parents also, to excuse themselves of much trouble or Charge, tho in order to their own greatest Good. The trouble in providing the Books, in this way will be none at all to the Catechumens ; And but little to the Ministers and School-masters respectively, being no more than the sending at once for a sufficient quantity of Books to serve a whole year. And as for the Charge, about two shillings and six pence will bring each Cate-
d chumen

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chumen through the whole Series of Catechetical Instruction ; and through the Three Classes ; and to a good understanding besides of the use of the Common-prayer, Which Charge is no more than a mite to a pound, compar'd with the expence, that the same Persons are usually at in the attainment of Humane Learning.

Reverend and Learned Sirs,

It is a great Trust that is repos'd in us by the Saviour of the World ; And there is not one Soul under our Charge, but will be required at our hands. If we shall have done our part by instilling the principles of Piety and Vertue in the minds of our youth, tho' afterward some should miscarry,

The Preface.

miscarry, (which will not often happen) the fault will be none of ours. But if we should deliver them out of our hands into the world very Heathens, as to any thing, that they know and believe of their Creation by, and dependance on God; Of the Fall of Man, his Rebellion against his Maker, and of his siding with the Devil; Of our Redemption through the Mediation of Jesus Christ the Son of God, And his rescuing us from the Dominion of Satan; Of the terms of our Reconciliation with our Maker, and of that Covenant of Grace which he procur'd for us, has preach'd unto us, and we have entered into; And lastly of the necessity

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of

The Preface.

of Regeneration, and Sanctification through the Holy Spirit. If they shall go forth of our hands uninstructed in these Fundamental and saving Truths; The Account, believe it, will be very fearful, that we must make for such Neglect.

It will be in vain for us then to plead the backwardness of Youth, and the perverseness of Parents, in excuse that we have not imbu'd them with the Principles of our most holy Faith. For should the Difficulties be as great as can be pretended, they are not to be mention'd with those which Christ, his Apostles, and the primitive Fathers underwent in the first propagati-

The Preface.

pagation of the Faith; and are not we to follow their steps? Or if we are found guilty of Tergiversation can we have the least pretensions to partake in their Rewards?

But alas, the difficulty will not be found (I am fully perswaded) half what we imagine, with a due management, and after a little tryal: I say with a due management; It is commonly apprehended that the greatest difficulty, will be to perswade the youth of 16 or 20 years to yield themselves to instruction. But let any Parochial Minister, that makes it his care to know his People, and their dispositions, invite at first, and encourage but half a dozen of those whom he observes most

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most sober in their Conversation,
best inclin'd to good things, and
more serious than usual in the
worship of God ; Let these but
come once or twice at the Mi-
nisters invitation, to confer
with him, and to be Instruct-
ed by him, and all the rest
will follow, as willing to be
thought as well of as those others ;
so that the compliance will be
wrought in some out of that pi-
ous affection they have to what is
good, in others out of an Emula-
tion to be counted as good as their
Neighbours, and at length will
be wrought in all, out of that
sense of Benefit they receive from
the good Instructions and Advice
of their Pastor. And the same ob-

The Preface.

observation may be made of the youth in Schools: So that neither they, nor their Parents after a prudent management, and some tryal, will be found obstinate, and refuse either to learn what they are put upon, or to provide themselves of such Books as are judg'd necessary for them.

In short, no considerable good can be attain'd to without conflicting with difficulties more or less. And the good here propos'd being of the highest nature, ev'n the Salvation of many Souls, and the rescuing of them from the Tyranny of the Devil, and the Torments of the damned, we ought here to stick at none, no not the greatest, in order to attain
ends

The Preface.

ends so great and glorious :
Much less will it be safe for us, not
so much as to attempt and try
the ways and means, that upon a
very little Tryal, will be found,
not to have in them any thing
that deserves the Name of Dif-
ficulty.

And thus Reverend Sirs, you
have the result of some thoughts,
wherewith I have been taken up,
as well with reference to the
most Practicable method of Cate-
chising, as to the Catechetical Do-
ctrine it self. To cultivate both
one, and the other, has been a
main part of my study, since I
first enter'd into the Ministry.
And I know not now any thing
more, that I shall be able to add
as

The Preface.

as to the facilitating the practice of Catechising by putting it into a method. But as to the Catechetical Doctrine it self, I must own I am still a debtor to the Publick, having discharg'd but one part in four of what I did undertake on the Church Catechism. The Call I had to another Service in the Plantations; The entire Avocation that has given me for these last Ten years; And a view of what I have been doing, with relation to those parts during that time (of which the following sheets, are a small specimen, and more of the like will soon follow) These I promise myself will sufficiently excuse me,

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with

The Preface.

with all equal and Candid Persons ; especially such as know what advantages I did of Choice cut my self off from by my discontinuance of the former, and on the contrary, what unsupportable Charges, as well as fatigues, I embark'd my self into, in the prosecution of the Latter. But since I find the judgments of many so favourable to that Preliminary work on the Church Catechism, that the remaining parts are earnestly desir'd, I have therefore begun to sequester my self from all other Business, and shall apply my future labours to the finishing of that undertaking, as God shall enable me.

And that God may bless the
endea-

The Preface.

endeavours of us all, (and our utmost Endeavours will be wanting,) to the instilling of the Principles of that admirable, and most Holy Religion, which Christ has revealed unto us; in the minds of our Children and Youth (a thing of such infinite consequence that it should be done) is the hearty Prayer of him, who is with the utmost observance,

Reverend and Learned

Sirs,

Your most Obedient

and Humble Servant.

Tho. Bray.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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A
Circular Letter

TO THE
Clergy of Mary-Land,

Enforcing the Duty, and by an
easie Method, accompanied
with a suitable Provision of
Books, facilitating to them
the Fundamental Work of
CATECHISING.

Reverend Brethren,

I Cannot without the greatest
Esteem of, and Affection towards
you, reflect upon the good Order
of your Conferences, and the
Unanimity with which you concur'd
in those pious Resolutions that were
made

made at your late Visitation: And so happy a beginning gives me good Grounds to hope the best things from you. The Truth of it is, when I sit down, and consider the several particular Methods of *Ministerial Instruction*, which you did then so cheerfully come into, I am not able, upon the most mature Deliberation, to conceive what can be wanting on your Parts, to render the People committed to your Charge, fully Edify'd in all things necessary to Salvation, but putting the Measures then resolv'd upon vigorously into Execution, both as to *Catechising*, *Preaching*, and *private Exhortation* and *Admonition*.

Now, the first of your Resolutions refers to *Catechising*, a part of your Ministry so exceedingly necessary in the *Church of Christ*, especially in an Age so loose in its *Principles* as ours is, that enough cannot be said to inculcate that matter upon you. But I forbear here, having so largely spoken
to

LETTER I. 3

to it in my VISITATION CHARGE :
 However, there is one Consideration
 of such peculiar Force to your selves
 in *Mary-Land*, that I must needs re-
 mind you thereof, to invigorate you
 in that Work, tho' I know the
 Words themselves were so emphati-
 cal, and the Occasion of them must
 be so fresh in your Mind, that it will
 not be easie for you to forget them.

And was it so, that but few Months
 past, the whole Province were in that
Consternation, on the account of their
Religion, as did far exceed our Expe-
 ctation? And did the *Patriots* of
 your *Country*, under such Difficulties
 and Discouragements as I forbear to
 name, Renew its Establishment, and
 that too with such an *Unanimity* and
general Consent, as shews it is no in-
 different thing to them? And where-
 fore was it, that notwithstanding all,
 they would Re-establish our Church,
 and provide for its Clergy amongst
 them? For this End they declare
 they did this glorious Work, THAT

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THEIR CHILDREN AND POSTERITY BEING PRESERVED IN THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH, FROM FACTION AND SCHISM, IN HONESTY AND CHARITY, MIGHT BECOME GOOD AND SOBER MEN, LOVING VIRTUE, HATING VICE, THE RATIONAL CONSEQUENCE OF TRUE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. Words surely that deserve to be written (both for the perpetual Honour of the Province, and for a Memorandum to you of the Clergy, to what purpose you are continued) in LETTERS of GOLD on PILLARS of MARBLE. It evidently appears from hence, that the *Christian Education* of their *Youth*, is what those *Patriots* do chiefly expect from you. And surely then, if for this Reason principally, a Clergy have been there Re-establish'd, so far as lies in their Power; In this Work therefore it is, that in a more especial manner, you are call'd to exert your Labours, as a most important part of your Ministry

LETTER I. 5

stry among them. And you are to conclude from hence, That you, of all the *English* Clergy, have a more than ordinary Call to apply your selves particularly thereunto.

And to me it promises fair, That you will do something to purpose in this Grand part of your Ministry, that you have divided the *Catechumens* into several *Forms* and *Classes*, lower and higher, agreeable to their Improvements, and their Years respectively. This is the Method of all Schools, in order to have their Scholars attain to Humane Learning; and this would be our Method in training up Youth to a thorough Understanding of the Christian Doctrine, were we half so zealous to have our Disciples become perfect Christians, as the Generality are desirous to have them accomplish'd Scholars. In this latter case Parents can be contented to have their Children Conn the Elements of Grammar with incredible

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torture of Mind, for several Years together, tho' for a long time with very little or no Understanding of those Rules, which (Parrot like) they can run over by Rote. And when with repeated Explications their Minds begin to open, so as to apprehend in some measure the Meaning thereof, yet near a third part of Life is spent before any do arrive to a competent measure of real Knowledge. And how studious are Masters and Tutors to excel each other in bringing on the Youth whom they have undertaken to Instruct, through several *Forms* and *Classes*, till they shall go out of their Hands with the Character of good Scholars? And why now are not the like Pains taken by Youth, and the like Methods by the Ministers of Religion, to perfect them in the *Knowledge of Jesus Christ, and Him Crucify'd*? A Knowledge so Excellent in it self, that the Great and Learned *St. Paul*, determined not to know any thing else save that, or in comparison with it; for
in

LETTER I. 7

in comparison with that, all besides was but Loss with him, *Phil. 3. 8.*

It is sorely to be feared, that we have much lower Sentiments of these Matters than we ought, or else we should be earnest, to the utmost degrees of Importunity, with all Parents, to put their Children under such a Discipline as shall be necessary to acquire the Knowledge of these, the most important things. But I beseech you let this be no matter of Complaint against you. First possess your own Minds, and then the Peoples, that nothing in the whole World is of such consequence to them as the Knowledge of Christianity in those its *main*, its *Characteristick*, its *primo-Essential* Principles concerning the Nature, and Offices of *Jesus Christ*, his Redemption of, and Mediation for us; since this we are assured is *Life Eternal*, thus to know the only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom he hath sent, *Joh. 17. 3.* And since for this the Apostle did not cease to

pray for his *Colossians*, Col. 1. 9, 10. and that they should be *FILLED* with the Knowledge of God's Will in all Wisdom and Spiritual Understanding. Let them know, that to furnish them with such Knowledge is the very End of your Ministry; That God gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the Perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying of the Body of Christ, till they all come in the Unity of *THE FAITH, AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD*, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. That henceforth they be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, Eph. 4. 11, 12, 13, 14. And finally, let them know, that the Way to arrive to a perfect Man, or to a Manly sense of things, and to a full Stature

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Stature in Christian Knowledge, is to begin with the Principles of Religion, and then leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, to go on to Perfection, Heb. 6. 1.

And when you have done what lies in you to possess the Peoples Minds with the Necessity of attaining to a full and perfect Understanding of the Way of their Salvation; then be sure, that for your own Parts you spare no Pains with them, and decline not those Methods, which are most proper to instruct them accordingly. Begin as with Scholars, in Teaching, or Hearing them repeat to you the Church Catechism, which contains the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*. Proceed next to make them get by heart some Exposition of the same, which is, to *go on towards Perfection* with them. And leave them not to themselves, till their Judgments shall be so ripen'd, as to be able in Words of their own, and not merely
in

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in Terms, which they have learnt by Rote from others, to give a Reason of the Faith that is in them.

And to this purpose, range all the *Children* and *Youth* of your Parishes, just as you would *Scholars*, into several Forms, agreeable to their several Improvements, and difference of Age. And this I do the more insist upon, because I am fully persuaded, that nothing does more obstruct and discourage both *Children*, and *Youth*, from yeilding themselves up to a thorough Discipline, till they become perfect in the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, than a mixing the Elder Youth with the meerest Children in the common ways of Catechising. It *Obstructs* the Childrens Progreſs, so as to make them think they have attained sufficiently, when they can barely recite by heart the Words of their Catechism, that they see the *Grown Youth* of their Parish call'd out to do no more. And on the other side, it *Discourages* the *Youth* from

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from yielding themselves to be Catechized, that they are accompanied with Children, which, as they apprehend, is a Disparagement to them. And both seeing that there is no Progressive Motion, no *going on from Strength to Strength*, from one degree of Knowledge to another, are taught to think there is little in it, and utterly to slight *Catechizing*.

But I need not insist; for indeed the *Catechetical* part is digested by you, so much to my Satisfaction, that if you shall Marshal all the *Youth* within your respective Cures into those *Three Classes*, as was done by you in your late Visitation, and shall *Catechize* them accordingly, I shall then hope very soon to see the Children and Youth in *America*, as far exceed many amongst us here, as the Children of the poor *Vandois*, which *Thuanus* speaks of, *lib. 27.* do those in the Wealthier parts of the Christian World. And the *Religious Education* of *Youth* being a part of
your

your *Duty*, of such infinite consequence, as well to the Planting *Christianity* with you, as the *Preservation* of it here amongst us, I conjure you, by all that Love which the *Son of God* bore to the *Sons of Men*, when he descended from Heaven to teach and enlighten the ignorant and benighted World, and which Love he particularly expressed to such tender Ones ; I conjure you by all this, to *Feed those Lambs*.

And that there may be no Impossibility, Incapacity, or any want of Means, urg'd in Excuse for any one's Omission in that part, I have provided you with such a Quantity of Books, adapted to those several degrees of *Catechumens*, as will supply all the poorer Children at leastwise, in your respective Cures ; and will also take care of even those of better Condition, should their Parents be so Barbarous, as to deny to provide them with necessary Books, rather
than

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than they shall want *Catechetical Instruction.*

For this I have found by Experience, even here at home, where any Expositions which may be thought necessary, are near at hand in comparison, being to be bought at the next Market-Town; yet such is the Indifference of Mankind to that which is good, that few or none will be at the Pains, no more than the Cost, to send for them. But if bought to their Hands, (and I could wish, that such as are of Ability in each Neighbourhood, or the Richer *Landlords*, in respect of their Tenants, would furnish each Parish with such Catechetical Sets of Books for the Use of Children and Youth now growing up; for, I say, if such Books were either Bought to their Hands) or lodg'd with the Parish-Clerk, of whom they might purchase them at an easie Rate, the Matter will be brought too home to them, for 'em easily to refuse to comply with the Ministers Entreaties

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treaties to give themselves up to be Catechized. Now, the Want of Books would be much more a matter of Excuse for both the Children and Youth in your Parts, where there is such a Scarcity, both of *Booksellers & Market-Towns*; and to take all manner of Excuse away, and to render so very necessary a Work, as *Catechetical Instruction*, to all the degrees of Easiness, practicable both to the *Catechist*, and the *Catechumens*, the Books themselves are provided both for you, and them, as is now said.

For the *first Class*, you have the *Church Catechism*, with a *Form of Morning and Evening Prayer for Children*: Also, a *Grace before and after Meat*. Together with some select *Scriptures*, declaring to *Children and Servants*, their *Duty to Pastors, Parents, and Masters*. And of these I would have you give one to all the poorer Families, and to *Servants Quarters* within your respective Cures, where there are Children; and to recom-
mend

mend it to the Wealthier Parents to
 buy for theirs. And after this, let it
 be your Care to have the Children
 frequently call'd upon to repeat their
Catechism, and to recite their *Prayers*
 and *Scriptures*. Let this, I say, be
 done, either by your selves, when
 you shall visit those Families, or by
 others, whom you shall intrust to
 call them thus to account in your
 stead. And as you cannot think of
 such proper Persons for this purpose,
 as the Members of the *Religious So-*
ciety, or superior *Class of Catechumens*
 within your Parishes, whom you will
 find very serviceable to you in this,
 and many other good Offices within
 your Cures : So indeed, this part
 must be perform'd chiefly by some
 trusty Deputies, it being equally im-
 possible, either that such small Chil-
 dren should be brought so many
 Miles to Church to be *Catechiz'd*, or
 that you should be continually visit-
 ing them at their Houses for that
 purpose ; for which, more than your
 whole time would be insufficient in
 such

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such dilated Cures. And it may suffice, that you do this in Person only, when either a *Baptism*, or the *Visitation of the Sick*, or a *Funeral*, or any other Occasion shall draw you out into any Quarter of your Parishes. Where a competition between the several Duties of your *Pastoral Office* is such, that your time will be devoured by any one of them, to the Omission of others equally necessary; if you should give your selves up wholly to that, there is a Necessity so far to dispense with the *Personal Execution* thereof, as to reserve a share for other parts of your *Function*: And this I know is too much your Case.

The *Second Class* of *Catechumens* you have judiciously appointed to consist of Children between *Nine* and *Thirteen*; not that you are to tie up your selves so nicely between such *Periods*, that a Child either under the one, or beyond the other, is always to be excluded that Institution
which

which you judge most proper for such as are within that Compass : But because it is to be expected, that as well *Christian Children*, as those of the *Jews*, should by that time be able to give some Account or *Reason of the Faith that is in them*. And it is of the greatest use to fix designs to certain *Periods*, which will cause such Expectations, that (generally speaking) things will answer within those terms. And as you have *Resolved*, with respect to this Rank of *Catechumens*, to have them learn by heart some Exposition with *Scripture Proofs* ; so I have accordingly sent you a sufficient Number of that kind.

This Book is divided into four Parts, and subdivided into Fifty Two Lessons, one for every Sunday in the Year ; in which are explained the peculiar Terms in Divinity ; and in which are given the Elements of Christian Knowledge, both in the general Doctrine, and particular Articles of the Covenant of
C Grace.

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Grace. And it is in this manner, I think, that your *Catechism* ought to be Expounded to young Children. For first, as to the terms in Divinity, *Theology* as well as all other *Sciences*, has some peculiar Expressions, which, till understood, render any Discourse on Subjects on that Nature utterly unintelligible to either Hearers or Readers; and therefore the peculiar Acceptations of such Words, so often occuring in our Discourses of Religion, must be first explained to the Youth, as we would have them be ever Edify'd from the *Desk*, or from the *Pulpit*. And such *Expositions* ought also to be so contrived, as to give the *Catechumens* a view of the Nature, Terms, and Conditions of their *Covenant with God*, for *Christianity* is no other than such a *Covenant*. And the whole Texture of our *Church Catechism* is, according to the *Analytical* and best *Method*, both a general and particular Instruction in that matter.

The

LETTER I. 19

The *Third Class* of *Catechumens*, you would have to consist of *Youth* grown up to some Years, and these you are for treating with in a manner something more Manly than the meer Children of Thirteen. You would not oblige them to get an *Exposition* by heart, but would recommend to them some proper Book to *Read*; but yet to read so attentively, and with such Application of Mind, as to be so much Masters of its Sense, that in Conference and Discourse with you upon those Subjects, they might be able to give you Reason to conclude they understood what they have Read. And indeed, hereby you will both lead them to exercise their own Judgments, a thing of singular use to them, and will also Treat them in such a manner (tho' it be in effect still but *Catechising*) as none will think themselves above.

And it is moreover very judiciously *Resolved* by you, to advise them more particularly to read such a Book or

Books, as shall more fully instruct them in the Nature, Terms, and Conditions of the *Covenant of Grace*. To understand and comprehend which thoroughly, is to know the whole Tenor of *Christianity*, and which, except it be conceived under such a *Scheme*, cannot (in my Opinion) be so rightly and clearly apprehended. Besides, these your *Catechetical Conferences* with them are primarily design'd to prepare them with proper Knowledge, that if *Adult*, and not yet *Baptized* (of which there are so many in the *Plantations*) they may be list'd to God in *Baptism*; or if they have been already *Baptized*, that they may ratifie their *Baptismal Covenant* with God in the *Lord's-Supper*. And therefore some more enlarged Discourse upon the Nature, Terms, and Conditions of their *Covenant with God*, such as shall farther explain, what through shortness might be left obscure in the former, must, I humbly conceive, be the most proper Book which at first you can recommend to them:
And

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And then other Discourses on *Faith*, or a *good Life*, such as you will find in the *Layman's Library*, when that former is fully imbib'd, may with greater Advantage be propos'd afterwards. Well, I think it my Duty to furnish here also, such of your Disciples, at least, as cannot provide themselves; and therefore give you Commission to take of Mr. *Jones* at *Annopolis*, as many of the *Short Discourses upon the Baptismal Covenant*, as you shall want for the poorer Youth, both Children and Servants.

And I order one Volume of the *Catechetick Lectures* at large for the use of your selves, as well as the Youth in each Upper Class respectively. The *short Discourses* are to be Read by them, & an Account thereof rendered to you: After which, a *Lecture* at large may be read to them by your selves, as a more full Explanation of that whole matter than the former.

But why? you will say, the *Doctrine* of the *Covenant* so often repeated? That according to this, through all the Degrees of *Catechumens*, there is no other difference in their Institution, than the very same things taught, first in a short, and then afterwards with a more enlarg'd and copious Explanation. To which I answer, that truly I shall desire my *Plantation Disciples* may never understand the *Doctrine* of *Christianity* otherwise, than as a *Covenant of Grace*. And then as for their being instructed in the same things first more generally, and afterwards more express and distinctly. This is like drawing at first the outward Lines of a Picture, and filling it up afterwards with all the particular Lineaments and Features. And the like Method will, I hope, make here as compleat a Mind within, as the other an outward Visage. And it will indeed, in my Apprehension, improve the Mind in Divine Knowledge, with an exact Proportion to the growth of the natural Understanding

ing; to have, as the *Exposition* explain the *Catechism*, so the *short Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant*, the *Exposition*, and the *Course of Lectures* explicate both. And I humbly conceive, several distinct *Expositions* in a quite different *Scheme*, would rather confound than clear their Apprehensions of *Divine Truths*; just as we observe in Schools, the often shifting of Boys from one School to another seldom makes any great Proficiency; whilst in keeping the Child to one, though a worse, he shall make some tolerable advance in Learning. The Reason is, every new Method does little more than Erase out of the Mind what was imprest in the foregoing, but a gradual Progress from one Degree of Knowledge to another, according to any one Series, will create a full and clear Apprehension of things. So that if, as I have elsewhere said, you shall your selves deliver to the *Catechumens* an *Exposition* more expatiated and large on the Point on which they have been read-

ing before, but to the very same purpose, only more copiously explaining the *Doctrine*, this will let yet a clearer Light into their understanding of these *Divine Truths*. And by this way of giving them *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*, they will at length arrive to a full Comprehension of that which is indeed the whole *Doctrine of Salvation, the Covenant of Grace*.

But the greatest difficulty will be, to bring the *Youth* to meet you to these Purposes, which is so much their greatest Good, that nothing in the World is of that Consequence to them. And therefore, because that *Youth*, when once they advance towards the State of *Manhood*, will soon outgrow your *Tuition*, it is necessary that you begin with them first.

And, I beseech you, with all Expedition, to form out of such amongst them in your Parishes respectively,
as

as are grown up to Years of Discretion, a *Class* or *Society* of *Catechumens*, whom I would have you to instruct, and direct, according to the Methods which you will find I have laid down at large in the *Preface to my Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant*, the Book they are to Read, Digest, and give you an Account of, to which I refer you. I call these your Young Disciples, indifferently, a *Religious Society*, or a *Class of Catechumens*. But since too many have such groundless Prejudices, (and it is indeed an amazing thing to consider, how far some pitiful Prejudices do, in many Cases, pervert the Minds of many wise and good Men from approving, or countenancing the best Designs) I say, since many are prejudiced against the Word *Societies*, add thereto the Word *Catechetical*, being the Ancient Term of the *Church of Christ*, to signify the Meetings of these your Disciples, and I know not then how any can except against them; for I am sure no good Man can gain-say, or oppose the *Thing*. For, FIRST,

F I R S T, It is most indispensably your Duty to call Young People together, and to give them proper and suitable Instructions, their Youthful Years being the very critical time of engaging them firmly to God; for if left to themselves at that Age, it is very great odds, but their natural Propensity to Evil, which is then in the Height; and the Allurements of bad Company, which are then most Engaging, will first enter them, and afterwards bind them close in the Service of the *Devil*, the *World*, and the *Flesh*. And let any of you, as you are the Ministers of Christ, and will answer it at the dreadful Tribunal, take heed how you let them alone to themselves to become Slaves of Satan.

S E C O N D L Y, It is highly expedient, that you should, for their better Conduct, put them under some *prudential Rules*. And I do recommend to you, for that purpose, those which you will find in the *Short View*
of

of the *Religious Societies in and about London*, herewith sent you; wherein you will see, that those here in *England* have form'd to themselves such Rules as deserve our highest Approbation: And, with some little Alterations, agreeable to the Circumstances of your parts, you may regulate the matter with reference to the *Catechetical Societies* (for such the *Religious Societies* ought all to be, more especially) with you in the *Plantations*.

THIRDLY, I do assert, That every Parochial Minister ought to be often present with them at their Meetings to instruct, and direct them what they are to read; to examine them, in order to know their Improvements; to take care they do not warp toward Error or Schism; and to prevent Seducers from coming amongst them.

The Danger of the two latter, I know is all that those who are the
most

most prejudic'd, have to suggest against such *Societies of Youth*. But whose fault is it, if their Clergy come not near them, tho' it should be so, that they either warp of themselves, or are seduc'd by others of a contrary Perswasion.

Nay, why then, with greater Reason, should not every *Parochial Minister* be always present with, and preside at their Religious Conferences? This, My Reverend Brethren, I do conjure you to do; and as I lay my Heart upon no one thing so much, as your forming these *Catechetical Societies* within your respective Cures, as the only means to train up a better Generation, than the wretched one now in being; so having found the extent of your Parishes to be vastly too large to have all such Youth meet you at one place, whether at the Church, or elsewhere, I desire you to quarter out your larger Parishes into as many Districts as you shall find necessary for their convenient meeting

meeting together, and to appoint so many several Days and Places for 'em to meet you (every Sunday in the Afternoon at Church, being always one of your Days and Places;) and this, if you shall do, tho' I have seem'd in the following Catalogue to provide only Books for one or two *Classes* in each of your Parishes, yet you shall not want the like Number of Books for as many *Catechetical Societies* as you shall be able to raise. And the Good God, to the Terror of Satan, and all his Adherents, succeed you in these your Labours and Endeavours.

To Second you in which, I have sent you a *Pastoral Letter*, *perswading Youth both to an early Entertainment of Religion; and, in order to that, to put themselves under the Conduct of their respective Ministers.* And as I would have you to give these Letters into the Hands of the most serious Youth in your Parishes; and such as are likeliest to be influenc'd by them,

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them, in order to form them into such a *Class* or *Society of Catechumens*; so I beseech you to apply to them to this purpose by these Letters, with all possible Expedition, least that any one of these poor Souls, for want of your securing him to God betimes, be pre-engaged to the *Powers of Darknes*.

And because I am absolutely of your Opinion, that could you procure some skilful Person in the Country, to teach your *Catechumens* to sing the Psalms Artificially, as set to the most approved Tunes (and Mr. N.-----S. and Mr. T.----P. being both skilful in Church Musick, will soon train up one or two Masters for the purpose) the Entertainments of *Psalmody*, especially according to the *Latter Versions*, would wonderfully invite the young People both to enter into a *Catechetical Society*, and would charm them into a constant Attendance on it:
I would

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I would therefore have you make it part of your Business at those Meetings of the Youth, to have them first taught to Sing by Note, and then afterwards, I would have you both open, and close up your *Catechetical Conferences* with a Psalm. This is, with St. Paul, to *Catch them by Guile*; and I am sure will be an *innocent and unfeign'd pious Fraud*. And as for the Psalms themselves, you have a Collection sufficient for that purpose sent you.

And now, when you have gain'd a *Society* of the best disposed Youth in your Parishes, when you have brought them to a love and liking of, and to take a sensible delight and pleasure in the *Religious Exercises* with which you entertain them: Nay, and when you have brought them thus to a *willing Dependence* upon you, so as to give themselves up *cheerfully* to your *Instruction* in all things; what a *Blessed Opportunity*
is

is put into your Hands of giving them to understand the *Right Use*, the *Reason*, the *Excellency* of all the *Parts* and *Devotions* in their *Common-Prayers*, than which I know not any instance of *Ministerial Instruction* of more consequence to the *Glory of God*, more befitting your *Function*, and more wanted at this *Day* amongst the *Common-People*.

I say, of such consequence to the *Glory of God*; For why? Of all the parts of *Religion*, as I have elsewhere observ'd, there is none does so immediately and directly point towards God, as *publick Worship*, and in the due Performance of which, the *Glory of God* is so much concern'd. This is that Homage the *Creature* pays to the *Creator*; and when it is *solemnly* and awfully done, God is glorify'd in the *Eyes of Men*; than which, what can be more reasonable and necessary? And when it is slightly or irreverently paid, God is publickly to the *World*, and in his own Presence, affronted;
than

55 c36
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than which what can be more provoking to his Divine Majesty? And to take care that God is duly and decently Worship'd, is your peculiar Province, and a matter too which does infinitely concern Persons of your *Function*. It is you that preside in *Religious Assemblies*, and the good Conduct of that affair is wholly under you. It is you alone can reprove there the disorderly and indevout; and as you will approve your selves for your Zeal in your great Master's Service, you will by no means endure there any Irregularity and Levity, but will most diligently instruct all your People so to demean themselves both in Body and Mind, as becomes such mean Creatures in the Presence of so great a God.

And yet, what is there wherein the generality of the Common-People do want Instruction more than in this very Case of paying their Worship to him with a due Solemnity,
D Reverence,

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Reverence, and Devotion? It is really enough to disturb the Spirits of any serious Christian, to observe with what Indifferency, Carelessness, Unconcernedness, so as to betray the no manner of Devotion in the Heart, the generality do demean themselves in the most solemn parts of God's Service. But this great Evil, so much the Scandal and Offence of Pious Minds, (and I wish I could not say of the *Reformation*) as it does in a great Measure proceed from Ignorance in the Nature, and Reason of the Offices; so it would soon be removed, were there but Twenty in each Congregation of the best disposed *Youth*, well instructed in their *Common-Prayer*, and directed how to make their *Responses* with a Grave, Solemn Tone, proceeding from a Devout and Pious Heart. Example does as much influence in this, as in any other Case; and a well regulated Service appears so Venerable and Becoming, that the whole Congregation will insensibly slide into the Imitation of those who render

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render it such. Now, that you should take the Opportunity, when you shall have gain'd a *Catechetical Society* of Youth to meet you in order to receive your Spiritual Council and Advice, more particularly to instruct them well in the Use and Reason of the *Liturgy*, is what I have formerly urged in the Preface to my *Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant*. And that I reiterate the same Advice here, is because I think it a point of the greatest Importance to the Glory of God, and to the Service of Men's Souls, that we Worship him aright. And that you may have no Obstruction in the Regulation of this matter, for want of Books, I have sent *Common-Prayers* for you to Lend to the poorer Youth. And that they may be duly directed in so material a part, I have sent you to Lend also to the *Catechumens*; that most approved *Rationale* on our Service, Dr. Beveridge's *Sermon on the Use and Excellency of the Common-Prayer*.

The last Resolution you have taken under this Head of *Catechising*, was, that so soon as you shall have duly prepared some of the *Superior Class* of *Catechumens* for the *Holy Sacrament*, so as not to fail of a sufficient number of *Communicants*, you would thence forwards have *Monthly Sacraments* in your respective Churches. And without doubt, the Minister who shall be able to form out of the *Youth* of his *Parish*, such a *Society*, as we are now speaking of, need never want Company at a *Monthly*, or more frequent *Sacraments*. When therefore you shall have train'd up a considerable number of the *Youth* of your *Parish*, to a very good pitch of knowledge in the Nature, Terms, and Conditions, and in whatever else pertains to that *Covenant*, which in that *Ordinance* they are to ratifie and renew with God; and shall withall have season'd them by your *Religious Discourses* with 'em, and *Pious Directions* given them, with such *Virtues* and *Graces*, as must qualifie them to be
worthy

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worthy *Communicants*; immediately upon that, I beseech you to appoint your *Monthly Sacraments*, and to make it your special care to have all the *Catechumens* of the *Superior Class*, constantly, as well as worthily to partake in that *Holy Ordinance*.

Hereby your Youth will be happily pre-engaged in the Service of God. And from them, you will be always sure to have Guests at the Lord's-Table. And if you can instruct and prepare some of the poorer *Negroes* so far, as that they may join in *Communion* with you at the *Supper of our Lord*, (as our Brother Mr. C-----ch has so worthily done) methinks the Diversity of Complexions will add a Beauty to the Spiritual Entertainment: And it may rejoice our very Hearts to behold Minds so enlighten'd, in Bodies so Dark.

Our Blessed Saviour gave it as a Sign of the *Messias's* being come amongst the *Jews*, That *the Poor had*

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the Gospel preached unto them. And sure our Americans may have reason then to look upon your Mission as from God, when they shall behold you labouring to improve the Minds of the meanest of them with the precious Truths of Religion.

The remaining part of your *Visitation Acts* relates to *Preaching*, to *private Application*, and to such *Methods of Discipline*, as are most necessary to be maintained among your selves.

And I shall, at my first Leisure, reflect likewise upon those Parts successively, in the same manner as here. I say, in the same manner as here; for I shall not offer to lay heavy Burthens upon you, and not touch them with one of my Fingers, but as with Relation to the Catechizing of all the degrees of Youth, Care shall be taken to furnish you with *Catechisms* and *Expositions* for them; so with reference to the two remaining Parts, I shall

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shall industriously endeavour to provide you with such necessary Helps as I can possibly procure, that so there may be no want of means to any of you to execute the most difficult of all your Resolutions, and nothing to urge in Excuse as to the Impracticableness of any one of those Particulars, you have so well, so much becoming your Function, *Resolved* upon; for this you may assure yourselves, that I am in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Reverend Sirs,

London, *March*
the 1st 1700.

Your most Affectionate Brother,

and Faithful Fellow-Labourer,

Thomas Bray.

21-4-33-41

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

1941

SYSTEMS

LETTER I 41
A
COURSE
OF
Catechising,

To be Observed in the
PLANTATIONS.

Consisting of Books more particularly fitted for the Use of the *Three* several Classes of *Catechumens* there, in order to Season the growing Generation with the Principles of Piety and Virtue.

Pursuant to the Resolutions made to that purpose the *Second* Day of the Visitation in *Mary-Land*, May the 24th, 1700.

I. For the *First* Class of Catechumens, consisting of Children under the Age of Nine.

THE Church Catechism, with a Form of Morning and Evening Prayer for Children. And a Grace before and after Meat. Together with some select Scriptures, declaring the Duty of Children, and Servants, to their Pastors, and Masters ————— 20

These to be given to so many as will make a Class.

II. For the *Second* Class of Catechumens.

An Exposition of the Church Catechism, with Scripture Proofs, fitted for

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for the *Second* Class of Catechumens in the Plantations: Divided into *Four* Parts, and subdivided into *Fifty Two* Lessons; one for every *Sunday* in the Year: In which are explain'd, the peculiar Terms in Divinity; And in which are given the Elements of Christian Knowledge, both in the general Doctrine, and particular Articles of the Covenant of Grace---20

These to be lent to so many as will make a Class.

III. For the *Third* Class, or the Society of Catechumens, to be fitted for the Blessed Sacrament, either of *Baptism*, if Adult; or the *Lord's-Supper*, if formerly Baptiz'd.

Prepa-

Preparative to the forming, and
Engaging of which *Cateche-
tical Society*,

I. *A Pastoral Letter* from a Minister, address'd to the Young Persons of his Parish; shewing them the Necessity and Advantage of an early Religion; in order to perswade the Youth of each Parish in the Plantations to enter into *Religious Societies of Catechumens*, under the Conduct of their respective Ministers — 20

These to be put into the Hands of the most serious Youth in a Parish, in order to form them into such a Class, or Catechetical Society.

And to which is added, the better to engage them to meet at such *Catechetical Conferences*, as well as to promote so Heavenly a part of Divine
Worship,

Worship, as Psalmody in its self really is,

2. *A Collection of proper Psalms out of the late Versions, with Festival and Sacramental Hymns, sufficient to be Sung in Families, Schools, and Churches. And set to the most approved Tunes which are in use—20*

These to be Sung both at the beginning and end of the Conference.

And then, for the proper Instruction of these Persons,

3. *A Short Discourse on the Doctrine of our Baptismal Covenant, proper to be read by all Young Persons, in order to their understanding the whole Frame and Tenor of the Christian Religion; and to their being duly prepared for Confirmation; with Devotions preparatory to that Apostolick and Useful Ordinance.—20*

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4. *A Course of Lectures upon the Church Catechism.* These to be Read by some one at the Catechetical Conference, more fully to Explain the whole Matter before Read or Discourt upon. ————— 20

5. *Common Prayers* ————— 20

6. *Dr. Beveridge's Sermon on the Usefulness and Excellency of the Common-Prayer* ————— 20

7. *A Few Cautions and Directions in order to the more Devout and Decent Performance of the Publick Worship of God, as appointed by the Church of England* ————— 20

These to be Lent to the Youth in the superior Class of Catechumens, during the time they shall attend upon their Catechetical Conferences, that they may then be thoroughly directed, by the Ministers respectively, in the Use of the Common-Prayer; pursuant to what has been propos'd in that Matter, in the Preface to the Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant, and has been here again urg'd in this Letter.

9:1:50

The End of the First Letter.

